

Town of Starksboro  
**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

Sat, March 3, 2012  
Robinson School Multipurpose Room

The legal voters of the Town of Starksboro and the Town School District in the County of Addison and State of Vermont met pursuant to the legally posted Warning to transact the business meeting on Saturday, March 3, 2012. The meeting was called to order by Moderator Dan Dubenetsky at 9:03 a.m. with 129 voters in attendance.

The Moderator announced that National Public Radio was here today, to capture the essence of Vermont Town Meetings for a documentary.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Moderator. Then a poll of how many years the voters have been attending town meetings. Four voters were attending for the first time today, and received some maple syrup from the Moderator. The Town Clerk, Cheryl Estey made a couple of announcements. Other announcements: Four Winds was selling food in the kitchen, The Mentoring Program had bird houses available for rent or purchase, the Art & Soul DVD's were on sale in the back of the room to benefit the Fire Department Auxiliary, Girl Scout cookies on sale today, Project Read! has tickets available for Jim Geier's special heart edition rocker, and the Book Fair has a donation box. Starksboro's Ryan Siegle Cochran won the world championship in the Junior World Downhill yesterday. Frank Spina announced that the school would be looking for community projects for the students toward the end of April or beginning of May. Sheets were available near the door.

The Moderator went over Town Meeting Procedures, Roberts Rules, and other general housekeeping procedures, and introduced the Town Officials. He then asked the assembly for permission for the Senators, Town Reps, and Robinson School Principal to speak. Then our representatives were each given about three minutes to speak. Rep Mike Fisher spoke on Health Care insurance. Rep Dave Sharpe spoke to Education Funding. Sen Harold Giard spoke to his two Senate Committees, and asked for help from the voters – 349-8722. The voters asked a few questions following.

Polls were open on Tues, March 6, 2012 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to elect Town & School District Officers, and to vote on the Mt. Abe and Hannaford Career Center budgets. The Presidential Primary voting was also being held today. Voter turnout was 330 voters, which included five seventeen year olds.

Article 1: Results of Australian Ballot voting held on March 6, 2012 were as follows:

Moderator	Daniel Dubenetsky	303 votes
School District Moderator	Daniel Dubenetsky	298 votes
Selectman	Susan Jefferies	287 votes
Town Clerk	Cheryl Estey	315 votes
Treasurer	Celine Coon	282 votes
Lister	Norman Cota	300 votes
Auditor	vacant	
Planning Commission	Dennis Casey	252 votes
Planning Commission	Kelly Mahlon Norris	226 votes
Cemetery Commissioner	vacant	

Library Trustee	Mark Lucas	272 votes
First Constable	Eric Cota	295 votes
Second Constable	George A. Wyckoff	263 votes
Del. Tax Collector	Amy McCormick	289 votes
Town Agent to Prosecute	Jim Runcie (by write-ins)	13 votes
First Grand Juror	vacant	
Robinson School Director	Bonita Bedard	262 votes

**Article 2:** Nancy Cornell made a motion to accept the Auditor’s Report for the year ending June 30, 2011, seconded by Eliot Putnam. No further discussion. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 2 passes.

**Article 3:** Blair Hall made a motion to vote \$497,401 for the proposed FY 12-13 General Fund Budget, seconded by Susan Jefferies. Susan Jefferies said this budget represents a .2% increase from last year. Thanked the road crew for all of their efforts during the past year. Discussion on work done on the town hall, an energy audit on the town office building, and future plans for work on the town buildings. Still no plans for the old town office, but are open for suggestions. There are currently some store fixtures still in the old office building. The Selectboard will be setting up a silent auction within the next few months for anyone interested. Questions on rental income on the old town office, as well as Preservation Trust’s grant money toward equipment and how that enters into it. The town would possibly think about selling the building if someone is interested. Currently the Post Office is generating \$585 per month rental income. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 3 passes.

**Article 4:** Heather Ragsdale made a motion to vote \$29,118 for the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund. Seconded by Chris Runcie. No discussion. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 4 passes.

**Article 5:** Scott McArdle made a motion to vote \$82,085 for the Road Equipment Reserve Fund. Seconded by Charlie Parker. Susan Jefferies spoke to the fact that this would normally be the year that we replace the grader (which is the most expensive piece of equipment) but are putting off this purchase for two years so that we can purchase a fire truck. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 5 passes.

**Article 6:** Norman Cota made a motion to vote \$1,000 for the Reappraisal Reserve Fund. Seconded by Celine Coon. Norman Cota, Lister, spoke to our Common Level of Appraisal and COD, which they have improved over the past couple of years. All of the mobile homes have been reappraised. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 6 passes.

**Article 7:** Mary O’Brien made a motion to vote \$23,495 for the Starksboro Public Library to fund the costs of operations for FY 12-13. Seconded by Jim Runcie. Chris Runcie introduced the other trustees and thanked the Selectboard for all of the improvements on the town hall / library building. It has made a huge difference, and is a much more comfortable place to be. They celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town hall and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the library this past year. Chris also spoke to all of the programs that the library provided. Bill Coon asked about the unexpended grant balance. Lisa Daudon, Librarian, said that the trustees decided to keep \$1000 in there as a buffer in case of emergencies, such as the computer virus that they had a few years ago. The library also has plans to upgrade and add to the library services to better serve the community. More discussion as to where this is reflected in the budget and what is included in this separate category. It was suggested that a separate reserve fund be set up for this. Results of energy improvements made to the town hall / library are a drastic cut in fuel oil expenses, more comfortable conditions in both winter and summer months. The solar trackers have

helped keep the electrical costs down as well. The Librarian spoke to all of the services that the library provides. Some folks spoke to what a gift the library is to the community. Bill Coon made a motion to amend the library request down by \$1143.58, seconded by Celine Coon. Further discussion. The library's endowment fund is made up of donations and grant money for a specific purpose. It was questioned why we would want to punish a group for having funds left over and if the grant money could be touched for any purpose other than what it was intended for. Several commented that it sounded more like a bookkeeping issue than anything else.

Voice vote called on the amendment, reducing the amount requested to \$22351.42. Amendment defeated. Voice vote called on the original article. More discussion. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 7 passes.

**Article 8:** Wendy McArdle made the motion to authorize the Selectboard to borrow an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for the purchase in FY 12-13 of a replacement truck for the Fire Department's 1984 utility truck. Seconded by Norman Cota. The loan to be paid within five years from the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund. Tom Estey, Fire Chief, spoke to this. This will be a used vehicle; a custom fire truck with a square front end, and room for five in the cab. The condition of the current truck is questionable, in poor condition underneath. The new truck will have a place to cool the firemen in the summer and warm them in the winter. The number one killer of firemen is heart attacks, which makes it so important to keep them cooled in summer months. The Fire Dept also has a building fund to help in building a new station at some point in the future in the south end of town. They hope someday to put a small addition on the station north of the village that would be a kitchenette, dining room/classroom combination. It could function as an emergency shelter and provide a good meeting place, as well as promoting retention in the fire service. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 8 passes.

**Article 9:** Norman Cota made a motion to vote \$11,160 for one fifth of the purchase price of six solar trackers currently installed at 101 Parsonage Road. Seconded by Wendy McArdle. Discussion on why the town was opting to purchase rather than leasing. The Selectboard explained that they won't make any big savings until they own them. Lots of discussion on the payment structure on the trackers and the most cost effective way to pay for them. Discussion on why the solar panels were on land and not on a roof. It was explained that these were trackers and that there was not roof space enough that faces in the right direction. Also these trackers are 30% more effective, and can dump snow off, and protect themselves from the wind. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 9 passes.

---

***10:39 A.M. - TOM ESTEY MADE MOTION TO RECESS TOWN MEETING; CONVENE TOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT MEETING. SECONDED BY BLAIR HALL.***

At this point we took a ten minute break. The Moderator threw out Mardi Gras beads to the voters.

***10:49 A.M. – The School District Meeting called back to order.***

Bonita Bedard, Chair of the Robinson School Board, spoke to the new Superintendent, David Adams, and hiring an interim Principal while Dan Noel is on leave for a year. Other topics covered were: update on negotiations on teacher's contracts. Bonita thanked the community for their support in the search for both a superintendent and an interim principal.

Bob Hall, Mt. Abe board member, spoke to retiring superintendent Evelyn Howard, and community forum projects.

Principal Dan Noel spoke to the idea of choices, past, present and future as it pertains to kids and the community. He also spoke to kids in poverty, and expanded time kids spend at school, both in the summer time and after school. Services have been expanded. The school has made a lot of growth in changing achievement. The area they are struggling most in is boys. Ninety one percent of girls read at or above reading standards. Only 67% of boys are at or above reading standards. They have been looking internally to recognize where changes can be made. Robinson has an unbelievable staff committed to making changes and growing to achieve better success rates. Dan then spoke to the interim Principal search, and how he believes that the school community and the kids will lead the Principal, not the Principal leading the school. Dan also talked about the School's Action Plan, and how there is a need for more involvement from the people who are not sitting in this room today. Per pupil spending should be a good way to see if we are growing equitably. Every kid should be able to have choices. Kids who are not educated don't get to make their own choices. Dan wants every single kid in Starksboro to have choices about where they live and what they do with their lives. Education allows you to choose your life.

**Art. 1:** Bonita Bedard made a motion to bring the School District meeting to the floor, seconded by Nancy Cornell. Article 1 asks the voters to appropriate \$2,492,138 to support Robinson School for the year beginning July 1, 2012. Bonita Bedard talked to Robinson's increasing enrollment, which is contrary to most schools in the state. She also talked on education spending and the per pupil spending. There is an increase in the educational spending, and the per pupil cost increased only .91%. They have actually decreased per pupil spending over the past two years, even though enrollment has increased. Discussion followed on: what accounted for the increase in the budget; the possibility of setting up a reserve fund, like the town has, for the solar panels; One voter asked that the administration and school board get real and start dealing with contracts and future negotiations on a real world basis. Our per pupil spending is the lowest in the district at \$12769 per pupil. More discussion on solar trackers and the school's options on paying for them. Compliments were made on the Food Service now in place, and teacher and support staff raises. Nancy Cornell expressed how proud she was to show the interim principal around the school, and how student focused everyone was. Discussion on how poor the economy still is, and how a lot of people are taking cuts and decreases in benefits. Voice vote called on Article 1, so voted. Article 1 passes.

**Art. 2:** Elliott Putnam made a motion to authorize the School Board to borrow money in anticipation of taxes. Seconded by Blair Hall. No discussion. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 2 passes.

***John Jefferies made a motion to adjourn the School District meeting, seconded by Richard Faesy.***

-----

***Eliot Putnam made a motion to reconvene Town Meeting, seconded by Dave Gratton.***

**Art. 10:** Peter Antos-Ketcham made a motion to vote money for the following In-Town requests. Seconded by Susan Jefferies.

Starksboro Cooperative Preschool	4000
Project Read!	250
Starksboro First Response	2500
Starksboro Sports Program	2500
Robinson After School Youth Program	425
Starksboro Volunteer Fire Department	<u>20000</u>
TOTAL IN-TOWN REQUESTS	29675

Bill Coon asked if the town of Bristol was asked to help fund Starksboro Cooperative Preschool this year. Rebecca Elder, Treasurer for the Preschool, spoke. She said that enrollment was up this year, with 70% being Starksboro kids, so they did not ask Bristol for funds.

Tom Estey, Fire Chief, spoke about their truck fund and how often they have to replace the pump, which costs between \$4500 - \$9000. The Fire Department now has a website, thanks to Dennis Hysko. Dennis also maintains the County website.

Kerry Kurt asked if all of these requests were in the budget last year. They were in budget last year.

Bill Coon asked why Project Read! was asking for funds when they had a fairly large balance from last year. Mary O'Brien spoke stating that they were actually asking for less this year, but wanted to ask the town for funds to support some new projects this year. They have also gone to an all volunteer status. More discussion. Not questioning as much as looking for clarity. Dan Noel said it has to be for the cost of books, as there were no other expenses.

Voice vote called, so voted. Article 10 passes.

**Art. 11:** Heather Bessette made a motion to vote the following sums of money for the listed Out-of-Town Requests. Seconded by Heather Ragsdale.

AC Home Health & Hospice	1964
AC Humane Society	500
AC Parent/Child Center	1600
AC Readers	350
AC Transit Resources	1235
American Red Cross	250
Bristol Family Center	500
Champlain Valley Agency on Aging	1300
Counseling Service of Addison County	1900
Elderly Services, Inc	900
Green Up Vermont	100
HOPE (formerly ACCAG)	1750
Hospice Volunteer Services	325
John W. Graham Emergency Shelter Services, Inc	970
Lewis Creek Association	550
Maple Leaf Farm	475
Northern Vermont Resource Conservation & Development	100
Open Door Clinic	250

Otter Creek Natural Resources Conservation District	176
RSVP	180
Vermont Adult Learning	700
Vermont Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired	500
Vermont Center for Independent Living	250
WomenSafe	<u>1000</u>
TOTAL OUT-OF-TOWN REQUESTS	17825

Heather Bessette spoke to the Counseling Service of Addison County.

Lisa Daudon spoke to Addison County Readers.

John Jefferies stated that the Out of Town Requests were down about \$4000, which appears to be Bristol Rescue Squad, who was not asking for funding this year. No letter received this year from them.

Donna Lescoe said that she was a volunteer with Hospice, and thanked everyone for the honor of being able to sit with their loved ones.

Heather Ragsdale asked what RSVP was (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). Lisa Daudon explained.

Scott McArdle questioned the 20,000 hours of community service as reported in the Counseling Service's report. As it turns out, that number is correct.

Voice vote called, so voted. Article 11 passes.

**Art. 12:** Rob Liotard made a motion to vote \$1500 to support the Starksboro Mentoring Program. Seconded by Nancy Cornell.

Rob Liotard, mentor & advisory board member, spoke to this very successful program. He said this would not be possible without the incredible support of Principal Dan Noel and the teachers at Robinson. The mentors stood who were present and received a round of applause. Wendy McArdle asked why this request was listed as a separate article. It was explained that this was the first year asking for funds, so a petition is required. Rob explained that the entire budget is around \$20000 and that two thirds is funded through grants. Donna Lescoe commented that this was a great program and it was a lot cheaper than jail or a rehab program. She just commented that the mentoring program should just let us know how the money is spent. Rob explained that the money is spent on an assistant administrator, training expense, supplies for the mentors to use, etc. Kerry Kurt said that this was a fabulous program, and the cost of one child kept out of prison for one year is \$40000. Rob said that there are currently twenty-three matches.

Voice vote called, so voted. Article 12 passes.

12:26

**Art. 13:** John Jefferies made a motion to bring this Article to the floor, seconded by John Thomas-Squire. The Article reads as follows:

In light of the United States Supreme Court's Citizens United decision that equates money with political speech and gives corporations rights constitutionally intended for natural persons, shall the town of Starksboro vote to urge the Vermont Congressional Delegation and the United States Congress to propose a United States Constitutional amendment for states' consideration, which provides that money is not political speech, that corporations do not possess the rights of persons under the United States Constitution, that the General Assembly of the State of Vermont pass a similar resolution, and that the town send its resolution to Vermont State and Federal representatives within thirty days of passage of this measure?

John Jefferies spoke to this. Some discussion followed.

Voice vote called, so voted. Article 13 passes.

**Art. 14:** David Gratton made a motion that the Real Estate taxes be paid, without discount, to the Treasurer on or before Thursday, November 1, 2012, at 5:00 pm, becoming delinquent after November 1, 2012 at 5:00 pm. Postmarks not considered receipt. Taxes may be paid in installments on August 1<sup>st</sup>, September 1<sup>st</sup>, and November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012. Seconded by Ted Barrett. Voice vote called, so voted. Article 14 passes.

**Art. 15:** Susan Jefferies made a motion to transact, vote and act upon any further non-binding business which may legally come before this meeting. Seconded by Dennis Casey. Blair Hall asked why there was no babysitting services available. The reply was that no one had offered to do it. Cecilia Bissell offered that high school students needing to do community service might be able to help out with this.

Cecilia Elwert mentioned that they now have a new model of Jim Geier's rockers with a heart that they are selling raffle tickets on. She also thanked Jennifer Turner, Recycling Coordinator, for a tremendous job. Jennifer never gets to attend town meeting because of recycling.

Ruth Beecher thanked Jim Geier for his beautiful chairs.

Wendy McArdle thanked Dan Noel for everything he has done for the school and wished him well in his new adventures.

Robert Turner stated that there were no contested races and encouraged people to run for an office next year if interested in a position.

Eric Hanson spoke to how useful the new Park and Ride behind the town offices was and encouraged folks to use it.

Rich Warren questioned the Moderator on only allowing folks to speak twice on any given article. The Moderator explained why under Roberts Rules. Rich Warren said that the dialogue can change tremendously during the article discussion. Frank Bryan said that he has been to seventy-two town meetings in his life, but has never heard a moderator do this. He said that there is the prerogative to just let it happen. He suggested that our moderator check out Roberts Rules one more time to verify.

Cynthia Kling spoke to it being okay to give organizations money without questioning that they have extra money to spend.

John Miller spoke to carpooling and the bus route that will be coming soon from Starksboro to Hinesburg.

Bill Coon mentioned town report write ups from organizations and how there should be more detail included.

Jody Higgs suggested that we all invite at least one new person to attend town meeting next year. Peter Straube asked Frank Bryan if there were any statistics on the attendance this year. Frank thought attendance was down this year. He also commented on the chairs and how uncomfortable they are.

Rich Warren thanked the Moderator for doing a good job.

Peter Marsh asked if we could have this same article added to the School Warning next year. Looked at the empty offices and said that they could be appointed if anyone was interested. He said that the Planning Commission had done a fine job redoing the Town Plan, and encouraged folks to look it over.

Donna Lescoe suggested bringing a cushion or back jack for more comfort next time. She also thanked the road crew, fire department and rescue for a job well done.

Cheryl Estey informed the crowd that we had five 17 year olds apply for addition to the checklist this year. She asked if there was any feedback on the availability of the town reports. There apparently was not. Sheldon Ball said that he was told at the Post Office that there may be a problem with having the town reports there for people to pick up. No one said anything to the town clerk, however. Mat Norris, Postmaster in New Haven, said that it would not be allowed.

Rich Warren asked if the school text could be in a different text next time.

Bill Coon asked if the same text and style could be used throughout the entire town report.

The Moderator thanked Four Winds for offering food today. Absentee ballots were available today. There were different groups with items available today. Thanks to our representatives for taking the time to attend our meeting today, and many well wishes to Dan Noel and his family during his leave of absence.

Celine Coon said that Rebecca Elder was working on re-designing the town's website. It will be much more user friendly, and townspeople will see more board minutes.

Alice Dubenetsky made a motion to adjourn, seconded by John Jefferies. Voice vote called, so voted. The Starksboro Town Meeting adjourned at 12:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cheryl Estey, Town Clerk

*Minutes approved by:*

---

Dan Dubenetsky, Moderator

---

Susan Jefferies, Selectboard

---

Peter Marsh, Selectboard

---

Mathew Norris, Selectboard



